

CLAIMS

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1. A process for accessing a virtual table comprising:
identifying a data source;
associating a record within said data source to a virtual table, said virtual table
5 having a different column signature than said record;
accessing said record; and
logically populating said virtual table with said record.
2. The process of claim 1 in which said record is accessed based upon data description
10 information for said record.
3. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in said
record.
4. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located external
15 to said record.
5. The process of claim 2 in which said data description information is located in a
second virtual table.
- 20 6. The process of claim 1 in which said data source is a database table.

7. The process of claim 1 in which said data source is an operating system file.
8. The process of claim 1 in which a user-defined function is used to access said virtual table.
- 5 9. The process of claim 1 further comprising:
identifying a second data source;
associating a second record within said second data source to said virtual table;
accessing said second record; and
10 logically populating said virtual table with said second record.
10. The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record also populates said row.
- 15 11. The process of claim 9 in which said record populates a row in said virtual table, said second record populates a second row in said virtual table.
12. The process of claim 1 in which said record comprises a first and a second column, both said first and said second columns used to populate a single column in said virtual
20 table.
13. The process of claim 1 in which a data manipulation operation is performed against

said virtual table.

14: The process of claim 13 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a SQL arithmetic operation.

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15. The process of claim 13 further comprising:

identifying a second data source;

associating a second record within said second data source to a second virtual table;

accessing said second record;

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logically populating said second virtual table with said second record wherein said data manipulation operation operates against both said virtual table and said second virtual table.

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16. The process of claim 15 in which said data manipulation operation comprises a database join operation.

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17. A computer program product that includes a medium usable by a processor, the medium having stored thereon a sequence of instructions which, when executed by said processor, causes said processor to execute a process for accessing a virtual table, said process comprising:

identifying a data source;

associating a record within said data source to a virtual table;

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